



LET'S EXPLORE AFRICA

Objectives:

- Introduce students to the size, prominent physical features, and diversity of the African continent.
- Teach students how to use a map legend and understand its symbols.

Recommended Grades: K-2

Materials (all included in the trunk):

- Yellow braided rope with knots
- Colored cones
- Map legends

Preparation: 15 minutes

Note: These activities will require three 30-45 minute sessions, preferably over the course of three days, but you may opt to abbreviate them and adapt them to fit the time you have available.

- Read over the activity and acquaint yourself with the locations on the map to which you will be bringing students.
- Choose the places and features you wish to emphasize. Add ones of your own that relate to what the class is studying and your students' prior knowledge.

Rules:



Shoes are not allowed on the map. Please have students remove shoes before walking on the map.



No writing utensils on the map.

DAY/SESSION 1

Introduction

Direct students to line up along the bottom border of the map so they are facing the continent of Africa from the south.

- *This is one of the very largest maps of Africa.*
- *Africa is a continent, not a country. (Help define the terms.) Africa is one continent made up of 46 countries.*
- *This map was created by the National Geographic Society and it is touring the country, going from school to school. Thousands of students have walked and explored on this map, having a lot of fun. Now you will too! Are you ready to go to Africa?*

Walk the Coast

Take out the yellow knotted rope and have each student hold a knot. Take one end of the rope and step onto the map with children following, crossing the Indian Ocean and heading toward Cape Town. Point out the Cape of Good Hope. Walk the **coast** (define this term for the children). As you walk point out:

- **Namibia** — home to cheetahs, the fastest land animal on Earth
- **Atlantic Ocean** — “swim” in it or dip your foot in and wave in the direction of North America
- **Gabon** — point out how green the map is here. This is tropical Africa. There are large jungles here. The area is home to lowland gorillas.
- **Morocco** — desert country on the coast
- **Sudan** — the largest country in Africa
- **Egypt** — home of the Great Pyramids, and the city of Cairo, the largest city in Africa
- **Nile River** — the longest river in the world!
- **Kenya** — home to the Maasai people
- **Tanzania** — home to chimpanzees and the highest mountain in Africa, Mt. Kilimanjaro. *There is snow on it. Did you know that it could snow in Africa?*
- **Horn of Africa** — the easternmost point in Africa, in the country of Somalia
- **Madagascar** — Each student will let go of their rope and jump onto Madagascar and back again, one by one. Lemurs live here—and only here—88 different species (or types)!

Explore the Land

Hold hands and form a circle around the Sahara desert. Notice there are no lakes or rivers. This is the largest desert in the world. The United States could fit inside this desert! Can you find another desert on the map? [Kalahari]

Stand side by side on both sides of the Nile River. Trace the Blue and White Nile. The Nile is the longest river in Africa.

DAY/SESSION 2

Review the “Walk the Coast” activity with children by playing a game of “Simon Says.”
Simon says stand in an ocean...on a coast...on the Nile River...in the desert...on an island...on the Cape of Good Hope...in Madagascar...in the jungle...on Mt. Kilimanjaro...on the Horn of Africa.

Divide the class so an even number of children are on each “Base Camp” (colored circles located in the corners).

Use the map legends to introduce the symbol for **town** and show them how to find one on the map. Have the children place a colored cone on a town and return to their Base Camp.

Discuss: Where are the towns located? Are they in the desert? What are they near? [water: rivers, the coast, or lakes]. Children pick up the cones. Introduce **capital**, and show them how to find one using the symbol found on the legend.

DAY/SESSION 3

Begin with review of terms and places visited yesterday.

Ask children to find a **lake** or another **river** (not the Nile).

Show students the **shaded relief** used to illustrate elevation for mountains and ask them to find some mountains on the map.

Ask children to stand on a black line. Introduce the idea that these lines are not seen from space like the deserts, water, mountains. These are the **border** lines that divide countries.

Ask children to:

- stand so they are in two countries at once
- find a country by the coast
- find a country with a river for a border
- find a country that does not touch the coast (define **landlocked**)
- find a country that is an island

Which Way Is Africa Bigger?

Is Africa bigger side to side (East to West), or up and down (North to South)? Have children guess and count how many guess for each answer. Then, have some of the students lie down feet to head and see how many children Africa is wide at its widest point. Have another group lie down feet to head and see how many children Africa is tall, so they are making a huge “plus” sign on the map. Compare.

Final Activity: Scavenger Hunt

Divide the class into two new teams, Lions and Cheetahs, each with an adult. Give each team its Lion or Cheetah Scavenger Hunt game card and one set of colored cones. See how quickly each group can find all the locations and mark them with a cone. When both teams have finished, ask the children to sit down. Review the items, checking if the cones were put in the right places. Which team finished first? Which team had the most correct placements?

LIONS	CHEETAHS
Gabon	Egypt
Nile River	Nile River
A capital city	A capital city
Madagascar	South Africa
Horn of Africa	Kalahari Desert
Mt. Kilimanjaro	Cape of Good Hope
Sahara desert	Namibia
A lake	A mountain
An ocean	An ocean
Kenya	Botswana
A coast	A coast
A landlocked country	A landlocked country